

Joachim Hoffmann

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Stalin's War  
of Extermination  
1941-1945

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OF EXTERMINATION  
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Planning, Realization  
and Documentation



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In the footnotes of this work, titles of monographs, anthologies and journals/newspapers are rendered in italics, titles of single contribution to them surrounded by quotation marks. The dates of the German Federal Archives documents, as well as those of the German newspapers quoted, are given in the original European format (dd/mm/yyyy). The author's quotations from German publication were (re)translated into English, even where English originals do exist.

## Preface to the English Edition

It is an honor to me to present a work of twentieth century historiography to the readers of the United States of America and Great Britain which attracted unusual attention immediately upon its publication in Germany in 1995.

Even in the USA, the German version of *Stalin's War of Extermination* (*Stalins Vernichtungskrieg*) was not completely unknown, since Professor Dr. Richard C. Raack of the California State University Hayward drew the attention to its content with a review in *Slavic Review* (Vol. 55, No. 2, Summer 1996). In two ground laying papers published in the renowned journal *World Affairs* (Vol. 158, No. 4, Spring 1996 and Vol. 159, No. 2, Fall 1996), he praised the book as an important contribution in the context of the now worldwide debate on "Stalin's Role in the Coming of World War II."

Jakob Heilbrunner in *Foreign Affairs* (October-November 1996) had to admit that this book will contribute to a reexamination of our knowledge about the Second World War which was hitherto considered certain. Thanks to the efforts of the U.S. publishing house Theses and Dissertations Press (a subdivision of Loewe Belfort Projects, Inc.), Professor Raack's suggestion to make an "English language version [...] available to the world market" has now been realized with the book at hand.

The intention of this book is to conclude my decades long research into the history of the Red Army and Stalin's methods of warfare. Even though it was written as part of an official assignment by the *Militärgeschichtliche Forschungsamt der Bundeswehr* (Military Research Office of the German Armed Forces), the head of this office, Brigade General Dr. Günther Roth, preferred not to publish this book as an official document, but to allow me a private publication. Considering the expected "huge public attention" of this book, this decision by Brigade General Dr. Roth was quite understandable. Since its first appearance in 1995, new editions of this

book became necessary in short intervals. As of today, no less than seven German language editions have appeared in two different revisions.

The reception of *Stalin's War of Extermination* was positive. The reading public was simply curious to learn how the term "War of Extermination" as created by Stalin came to be realized in practice. Moreover, my book barely preempted an inflammatory photo exhibition in Germany which, incidentally, used the term "War of Extermination" as its motto, but whose purpose was to malign the German Wehrmacht. This exhibition created an unforeseen outrage and it had to be canceled due to its many forgeries and historical errors. Soon, I received grateful letters from German citizens of all walks of life, some of them secretaries of state and other high German officials, University Professors and personalities from the military, to whom their war experiences had left indelible impressions. After a short while, an increasing amount of positive reviews had been published in domestic and foreign publications. In several cases, my "neck-breaking" courage was praised—namely that I had published such a book in the poisoned atmosphere of the Federal Republic of Germany.

To bring the term "War of Extermination" into its context with its inventor Stalin, caused raging protest within circles of the aggressive "anti-fascism" of left-wing ideologues and Stalin apologists. Under no circumstances could they allow a scientific correction of their distorted world view. In the USA as well as in Great Britain, i.e., in countries with a long tradition of free speech and free scientific research, it might be stunning for the reader to learn which measures were taken—partly even by the authorities—to somehow suppress this unwanted work of history and to ostracize its author in the public.

These methods are even more reprehensible if one considers that the freedom of science is solemnly proclaimed and guaranteed by the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany. This intolerant tendency to enforce conformity prevailing in Germany toward dissenting opinions appears to be insurmountable. This, too, might explain the persecution of authors and the burning of books which has resurfaced in Germany in recent years to an extent which had been thought to be impossible after 1945.

Hence, *Stalin's War of Extermination* was not spared from the harassments of "political correctness." In the German Parliament, the *Bundestag*, it was labeled by left-wing Representatives a "monstrous publication." In 1996, a scandal arose in the *Bundestag*. With six parliamentary inquiries

and 14 supplementary questions, left-wing representatives demanded on February 28, 1996, that the German government, which—by its Basic Law—is absolutely not responsible for historiographic issues, started disciplinary measures and prosecution against me as a historian and the author of this book, because my book did not agree with the confused opinions of these biased leftists. This parliamentary maneuver was continued on September 13, 1996, when the same circles tried again to drive the German government into a corner with twelve parliamentary inquiries and ten supplementary questions. Involved in this were the members of parliament Buntenbach, Beck, Nachtwei, Fischer, and Müller, from the left-wing radical parliamentary faction “Federation 90/The Greens.”

Even the media paid attention to the attempt of these radical representatives to transform the *Bundestag* into an inquisitorial tribunal against the absent historian they were discussing. The vice president of the *Bundestag*, Herr Klein, even felt obliged to protest against the impertinent tone of these representatives. Of course, the German Federal government is neither competent nor able to decide what is historically correct and what is wrong. Consequently, it did nothing to proceed against me, especially because in the meantime, *Stalin's War of Extermination* had gained huge public attention.

However, the prevailing conditions in Germany, an important liberal state under the rule of law, are characterized distinctively if one considers that its parliament can force the government to promise to thoroughly analyze a book “for any illegal content or statement”, a book, after all, which was written by a professional historian following the strict rules of science and firmly based on documents. On March 7, 1998, former U.S. Army Chaplain (Captain) Robert H. Countess, Ph.D., wrote to the late German Parliamentary Secretary of State Michaela Geiger. He had found appropriate words for those provocateurs in the *Bundestag*:

“In America and other lands at present the BRD suffers unnecessary embarrassment because of the Hoffmann book controversy. The *Bundestag's* discussion of a history book, namely Dr. Joachim Hoffmann's ‘Stalins Vernichtungskrieg 1941-1945,’ is [...] a cause for great alarm since the *Bundestag's* discussion possesses the aura of an Inquisition with threats of punishment upon author Joachim Hoffmann and upon any Wissenschaftler [scientist] who might publish a work that is politically incorrect.”

After this failure in the *Bundestag*, the attacks focused more intensively on me directly as a historian employed by the federal authorities.

Because of the book at hand, the State Office for the Protection of the Constitution (*Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz*) in the German State Baden-Württemberg, a provincial authority, whose competence of spying on its citizens can hardly be made understandable to U.S. citizens, started to ostracize me publicly as an “enemy of the constitution.” This appeared in a poorly edited mass brochure issued yearly. Of course, this is a severe accusation, which, however, needs to be well-founded. After all, I was appointed to the scientific service of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1960 by a certificate of the Federal President of Germany, and in 1995 I retired with a certificate of the German Minister of Defence, “with Gratitude and Acknowledgment for the loyal service to the German people”. Since no misconduct could be found after 35 years of honorable service, they fell back to deceptions. As an excuse, they used an allegation not to be described here in detail, but whose untruthfulness was strikingly obvious. As an aside, the head of this spying office, Herr Bollacher, unintentionally revealed the poor base of his allegations:

“The State Office has a review of ‘Stalin’s War of Extermination’ in its possession.”

What a miserable argument, as if a work of history or the existence of a negative review can prove the heavy accusation of being an “enemy of the constitution.” And what a deception! At this time, more than 50 positive reviews existed from domestic and foreign publications!

According to the assessment of an experienced old judge and public prosecutor, the actions of this State Office for the Protection of the Constitution Baden-Württemberg border on criminal behavior. However, an official complaint of mine against the Minister of the Interior of the State of Baden-Württemberg was rejected by a subaltern clerk named Maier with impertinent words.

Of course, the respectable and loyal citizen is not totally at the mercy of the arbitrariness of the authorities. There is still the way into the public’s mind. Subsequently, the experienced author Bernd Kallina devoted a detailed article to this scandal surrounding the Baden-Württemberg authorities and published it, alongside with contributions by other reputable authors, in an anthology edited by Professor Hans-Helmuth Knütter and Stefan Winkler entitled: “*Der Verfassungsschutz. Auf der Suche nach dem verlorenen Feind*” (The Office for the Protection of the Constitution. On the Search for a Lost Enemy, Munich 2000).

All machinations directed against this book not only failed miserably, but, to the contrary, have even increased the curiosity among the readers. *Stalin's War of Extermination* has become a bestseller. However, it has become pretty obvious to what kind of harassments a historian is exposed to who feels bound to publish nothing but the truth if his research results do not match the requirements of the "political correctness". *Habent sua fata libelli...* (Small books have their fate...)

On this occasion I want to cordially thank the Director of Theses and Dissertations Press, Dr. Robert H. Countess, for his intensive interest in my book and for his decision to make the content of it available in English to the interested reader in the United States, in Great Britain and elsewhere in the English speaking world. My warmest thanks also go to his Assistant Director, Mr. Peter Webber, who is responsible for the entire project, to the translator, Mr. William Deist, to the editorial reviser, Mr. Robert Berkel, and last but not least also to all other persons involved in the publication of this extraordinarily exact English edition.

Perhaps this book will contribute to sharpen the eyes of the readers in the English speaking countries for the methods of their former war ally, Joseph Stalin, a monster who once was thoughtlessly referred to as "good old Uncle Joe".

Freiburg, March 6, 2001

Joachim Hoffmann



to the head official, Brigadier General Dr. Günter Roth, for the sympathetic liberties he permitted me. In addition, I would like to thank my official colleague, Mrs. Karin Hepp, who successfully carried out negotiations for me in Moscow, as well as Mrs. Elke Selzer, who helped prepare the present manuscript, just as she did with my work on the Caucasus, and completed both with great reliability. In contrast to the spirit and letter of “freedom of research” as proclaimed under the German Basic Law, it is, unfortunately, advisable today to have many passages of a historiographical text revised for “criminal content” prior to publication—an almost disgraceful situation. This awkward task was undertaken, tactfully and amicably, by Court Vice-President Johann Birk of Freiburg; heartfelt thanks in this regard are due to him at this point. Sincere thanks are also due to the head archive director, Colonel Dr. Manfred Kehrig, who kindly wrote the preface.

Freiburg March 1995

Joachim Hoffmann